



Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations and is the UN body primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security. In December 1979, the Council consisted of fifteen members: five permanent members: the United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France, and China. In addition, ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly. Under the UN Charter, the Security Council may investigate disputes, recommend peaceful solutions, impose sanctions or other non-military measures, and, when necessary, authorize action to maintain or restore international peace and security. As delegates consider the crises before the Council, they must balance national interests and Cold War alliances with the Security Council's responsibility to respond to threats to international peace and security.

Topic I: Soviet-Afghan War

Afghanistan experienced growing political instability following the April 1978 Saur Revolution, when the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew President Mohammed Daoud Khan and established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The new government developed close relations with the Soviet Union and introduced controversial political and social reforms, while violent resistance to the government spread throughout the country. Internal divisions within the PDPA further destabilized Afghanistan, culminating in Hafizullah Amin's seizure of power following the removal and death of President Nur Muhammad Taraki in September 1979.

The Soviet Union and Afghanistan had previously signed the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation in December 1978, establishing closer political and military cooperation between the two states. By December 1979, the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the possibility of direct Soviet military intervention raised significant questions for the Security Council regarding state sovereignty, foreign intervention, regional security, and the limits of collective action during the Cold War. Delegates must also consider Afghanistan's strategic location near the Soviet Union, Iran, Pakistan, and China, as well as the competing interests of the permanent members of the Security Council.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Under what circumstances can one state legitimately deploy military forces into another state at the request of its government?
- 2) How can the Security Council respond to the crisis while also respecting Afghan sovereignty and preventing further regional escalation?
- 3) How might Cold War rivalries affect the Security Council's ability to act?

Topic II: Iran Hostage Crisis

Relations between Iran and the United States deteriorated dramatically following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which resulted in the overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and the establishment of the Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Tensions increased when the United States permitted the former Shah to enter the country for medical treatment in October 1979. On November 4, Iranian students seized the United States Embassy in Tehran and took American diplomatic personnel hostage.

The seizure raised serious questions regarding the protection of diplomats and diplomatic missions under international law. The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations establishes protections for diplomatic personnel and the inviolability of diplomatic premises. The crisis presents the challenge of securing the hostages' release while avoiding military escalation and addressing Iran's claims regarding foreign interference in its domestic affairs.

Questions to consider:

- 1) What can the Security Council do to secure the hostages' release without escalating the conflict?
- 2) How should international law regarding diplomatic missions shape the Council's response to Iran?
- 3) Should sanctions be considered if the Security Council's negotiations and demands fail to secure the hostages' release?

Topic III: Rhodesian Bush War

The Rhodesian Bush War developed from the dispute surrounding white-minority rule in Rhodesia and the territory's 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom. The declaration was not internationally recognized, and the Security Council subsequently imposed economic sanctions against Rhodesia, including through Security Council Resolutions 216 and 217 (1965) and mandatory sanctions under Resolution 253 (1968).

Throughout the 1970s, the Rhodesian government fought an escalating conflict against African nationalist movements, principally the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), associated with Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), associated with Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). The conflict became intertwined with broader struggles over decolonization, racial minority rule, and Cold War competition in southern Africa.

By late 1979, negotiations involving the United Kingdom, the Rhodesian government, and nationalist movements had produced the Lancaster House Agreement, creating a path toward a ceasefire, elections, and internationally recognized independence under majority rule. The Security Council must consider how the international community can support the transition while preventing renewed violence and ensuring that a political settlement produces a legitimate and stable government.

Questions to consider:

- 1) What role should the United Nations play in supporting the implementation of the Lancaster House settlement?
- 2) When and under what conditions should international sanctions against Rhodesia be lifted?
- 3) What can the international community do to ensure elections and political transitions occur free of violence or external interference?